REVIEW OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION: ADVOCATING FOR SECURITY IMPROVEMENT TO PROMOTE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GGA

Good Governance Africa

REVIEW OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION: ADVOCATING FOR SECURITY IMPROVEMENT TO PROMOTE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Trends, Structural Reforms and Intercontinental Trade Dynamics: The case of Sierra Leone's Approach to the Implementation of the AfCFTA.

About Good Governance Africa
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Good Governance Africa aims to promote good governance in Africa through applied research and critical debate (advocacy). Our publications include Africa in Fact, the African Survey and other projects. Research areas include local governance, land and natural resources, early childhood education and national security. GGA West Africa is also concerned with the promotion of local economic development, urban governance, right to information, justice and accountability, innovation, environmental sustainability (including climate change issues) and leadership.

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List of Acronyms

AfCFTA	**African Continental Free Trade Area**
AQIM	**Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb**
ASM	**Artisanal and Small-scale Mining**
AU	**African Union**
BNI	**Bureau for National Investigations**
CCA	**Common Country Assessment**
CDD	**Centre for Democratic Development**
CEPS	**Customs, Excise and Prevention Service**
CID	**Criminal Investigation Department**
CPI	**Consumer Price Index**
CRVA	**Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment**
CSDN	**National Defence and Security Council**
DI	**Defence Intelligence**

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List of Acronyms

DISEC	**District Security Council**
DLEU	**Drug Law Enforcement Unit**
ECOWAS	**Economic Community of West African States**
EMB	**Election Management Boards**
EOCO	**Economic and Organised Crime Office**
GAF	**Ghana Armed Forces**
GBV	**Gender Based Violence**
GDP	**Gross Domestic Product**
GGA	**Good Governance Africa**
GIS	**Ghana Immigration Service**
GNFS	**Ghana National Fire Service**
GPS	**Ghana Police Service**
HDI	**Human Development Index**
IED	**Improvised Explosive Device**
ISGS	**Islamic State in Greater Sahara**
ISWAP	**Islamic State West Africa Province**
JAS	**Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awafi Wal-Jihad**
JNIM	**Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin**
LMIC	**Lower Middle-Income Country**
MAA	**Arab Movement of Azawad**
MDG	**Millennium Development Goals**
MFA	**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
MINUSMA	**Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali**
MMDAs	**Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives**
MUJWA	**Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa**

List of Acronyms

NACOM	**Narcotics Control Commission**
NDC	**National Democratic Congress**
NPC	**National Peace Council**
NPP	**New Patriotic Party**
NSA	**National Security Architecture**
PSC	**Peace and Security Council**
PSO	**Peace Support Operations**
RD	**Research Department**
REGSEC	**Regional Security Council**
RPC	**Regional Peace Council**
SALW	**Small Arms and Light Weapons**
SDG	**Sustainable Development Goals**
SSR	**Security Sector Reform**
UNODC	**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**
UNSCR	**United Nations Security Council Resolution**
VE	**Violent Extremism/Extremists**
WARO	**West African Regional Office**

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Foreword

Evidence shows that the development of the West African sub-region of the continent of Africa is lagging partly due to long periods of insecurity and political instability. A region which has long shown so much promise in terms of its resource endowment, youthful population and tourist attraction,it is unfortunately, bedevilled with long and protracted conflicts, civil unrests, cross border crimes and in recent times acts of terrorism, extremism and religious intolerance. Renewed forms of dictatorships by governments in the subregion is leading to political upheavals and disturbances. This development also partly leads to military insurgencies and coup d'états. The Sahel region of West Africa particularly is giving room for much concern following the concentration of some of the extremist activities in this part of the region. Lives and properties are being destroyed amidst growing insecurities in countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso. Failed governance systems in these countries and other West African nations with even milled forms of insecurity like Ghana, are giving room for citizens to lose trust in their governments' ability to offer sustainable forms of protection for lives and property.

With the continental quest to achieve growth and prosperity for all of its people (Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063), it is imperative for continental blocks such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to work with its member countries to address the growing state of insecurity in some countries. The implications of these insecurities have far reaching consequences for even the relatively stable economies of the West African block given the interconnectivities that exist in trade and development. With the coming into operation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in January 2021, the call to address the insecurity in the West Africa and for that matter

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the whole of Africa cannot be overemphasised. Cross border crimes and extremist activities have the potential to thwart the well-intended policy to grow intra-Africa trade, raise individual country incomes and spur much needed economic growth and prosperity of the entirety of Africa. In effect, if not checked, the insecurity in the sub-region can perpetuate the over-reliance of member countries on western economies when in actual sense these countries could harness their own resources to fuel their own development if there is peace, order and respect for human rights.

This study has made important revelations as to the contributing factors that have occasioned the growing insecurity in the sub-region. From corruption, unemployment, weak governance institutions and poor governance itself, the report chronicles some of the root causes for crimes and insecurity in West Africa. It will be of great interest to researchers and development actors to read how failed governance in the region has led to increasing inequalities with the few who are able to rise to governance positions depriving the very people who give them the mandate to rule. The teeming youth in West Africa as has been alluded to in this report, due to limited or no economic opportunities, have become vulnerable to extremists and with little provocations are ready to join in creating mayhem just to be noticed. The political

class is gradually losing its moral authority to govern after years of failed promises with increasing   cases of amassing wealth for their immediate benefits, cronies and acquaintances to the detriment of the masses. Even more devastating in recent times is the creeping acts of impunity; democratically elected governments who tend to be power drunk and try to change constitutional provisions just to perpetuate their stay in government beyond their mandatory terms.

The highlights and discussions on the security situation in the West African Sub-region as presented in this report, will provide useful information and policy pointers to shape security discourse going forward. The Good Governance Africa – West Africa Regional Office (GGA-WARO) is looking forward to using the findings and recommendations in the report to engage other stakeholders as part of its contribution to promoting a safe and secure environment to spur Africa's development agenda for all.

Signed

Tina Serwaa Asante-Apeatu

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Executive Summary

West Africa and Ghana face serious security challenges that have consequences for public safety. The sub-region over the years has encountered several unresolved security problems that are further compounded by emerging threats and health pandemics. The spread of terrorism and religious extremism in the Sahel, increasing poverty and inequality, youth bulge and the increasing unemployed, democratic decline and inadequate provision of public services have all affected the security of West Africa.

As West Africa's population booms and its economy continues to expand, the opportunities for growth across the region are vast. Despite economic gains recorded for many of the countries in the sub-region, which has obviously been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, economic growth rates in most of the countries are lagging and poverty remains high alongside widening inequality. Essentially, the economic growth has not translated into improved economic and social wellbeing of the people leading to strains in society. Many of the citizens are not benefiting from the growth which has resulted in grievances from a large section of the population. When people are unable to meet their basic needs or obtain what they want from the government, they generally resort to either peaceful means such as mass protests, or illegal and criminal practices or to unbridled violence that can lead to public unrest and instability

The growing youth population in West Africa serves as a potential catalyst for economic growth and at the same time constitutes a challenge that can be a trigger for violence if the expectations of the youth for jobs and better living conditions remain unmet. Demographic data suggest that the share of youth in the labour force will generate a demographic dividend for Africa that will help boost economic growth. Unfortunately, the dividend which depends on the demo-

graphic transition is progressing very slowly with regional fertility averages either stagnant or increasing affecting the prospects of economic growth. A major concern for the youth is the lack of a steady income which makes it extremely difficult for them to move out of poverty.

Weak governance systems drive insecurity in West Africa. Weak governance systems lead to chronic instability, in which the state is unable to protect its citizens and their property, control its borders and the whole of its territory, and create an environment that promotes diversity and cohabitation. Bad governance characterised by institutional corruption and greed, poor infrastructure and discrimination along ethnic lines combine to undermine the integrity of the state, sparking violent conflicts. In Benin, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire challenges to bad governance provoked instability. In other countries, the unjust distribution of resources from abundant natural resources and the perceived discrimination of minority groups have incited violence. Evidence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria points to this worrying situation. In other areas, disputes over land, water and chieftaincy have claimed lots of lives in low intensity conflicts in northern Ghana, Mali, Togo and Western Cote d'Ivoire. These conflicts create major human and regional security threats through spill overs effects due to displacements.

Since 2010, the drivers of security and threats in West Africa and Ghana in particular have shifted to sub-regional and community-based

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threats. State capacity is weak at the periphery with many border communities providing fertile grounds for transnational organised crime networks to flourish. The role of the state has not changed but it has failed to continuously meet the expectations of citizens leading to grievances that translate into tensions and public protest some of which turn violent. The presence of non-state armed actors has increased significantly with their activities powering violence and insecurity in West Africa especially in the Sahel areas where the state's presence is traditionally weak and contested. At the sub-state level, community-based conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions dominate and these conflicts if not well managed may enmesh with violent extremism to further exacerbate the insecurities at the sub-state level. Meanwhile, the presence of certain recurrent drivers, common to a variety of countries in the West Africa sub-region, drives radicalisation and violent extremism. These include lack of socio-economic opportunities, marginalization and discrimination, poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law, prolonged and unresolved conflicts. The easy access to weapons in a context of widespread insecurity pose serious security challenges that easily escalate community tensions into violence in West Africa. The failure of the state justice system that are often perceived as distant and corrupt to handle local conflicts nurtures frustration that form a fertile ground for violent extremist groups. Maritime security and trafficking add to the vista of insecurities in the region.

The democratisation project in West Africa has achieved mixed results in terms of building on institutions and in establishing their legitimacy. Whilst some countries are deepening their democratic credentials, others have retrogressed. Authoritarianism is on the ascendency among the ruling elites with some countries ruled by "strongmen". Despite the decline, a number of countries have over the years strengthened their democratic systems but within this category, there is a tendency for the ruling government to suppress opposition groups, postpone elections, eliminate term limits, and abuse human rights to maintain power. The recent coup in Guinea points to the resurgence of "coup culture" in West Africa in contravention of the Lome Declaration of 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy.

Protests in Gambia against Adama Barrow
source: (https://www.dw.com/en/gambia-we-are-moving-from-high-hopes-to-a-letdown/a-52161715)

Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad all in the past have seen new leaders rise from their respective militaries. These coups as captured by the 2014 AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) originates from the deficiencies in governance. Greed, mismanagement of diversity, human rights violations, unwillingness to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions and the revision of term limits through unconstitutional means and corruption trigger uprisings and provide opportunity for the military to take over the reins of power. A detailed analysis of the performance of the state from the perspective of the executive, judiciary, security and development sectors will provide insights on the effects of these factors on the instability of the region.

Ghana is considered peaceful but surrounded by unstable states:

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Burkina Faso to the north with ever expanding and violent terrorist challenges and La Cote d'Ivoire that has just gone through a contentious election to the west and Togo, that has gone through elections but with prevailing and deepening underlying tensions. Beyond Burkina Faso into the Sahel region, the threat of violent extremism and terrorism that are transnational in character persist with a weak state capacity to respond. Ghana's threat profile is also affected by her engagements in international peace support operations, the presence of foreign businesses and interests, and easy access to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Internal insecurities at the sub-state level characterized by community violence (resulting from mining, land, chieftaincy and environmental challenges) and threats faced by the state (pandemics, vigilantism, small arms and light weapons proliferation (SALW), road accidents, cyber and maritime insecurities), increasing crime are all contributing to fragilities. All these factors alongside the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic have implications for the stability and the development of the region.

Aside from the generality of some of the threats, each country in the sub-region also faces challenges that are peculiar to it, such as the Niger Delta militancy, the large-scale vandalism of national infrastructure, and ethno-religious violence in Casamance region of Senegal, the repeated threat of food insecurity and the Tuareg terrorism in Niger Republic; north-south regional conflict and tensions in Ivory Coast and Guinea; repeated Tuareg rebellions in Mali; and mass poverty and youth unemployment in post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone. Resource conflicts, widening inequality, corruption and violence around the electoral process due to mistrust between the main political parties affect Ghana.

Recommendations

Specifically, countries in the region could consider the following policy recommendations:

1. Pursue, stability, growth, and development

The potential for economic growth in West Africa is enormous. With improving economies and a youthful workforce looking for jobs, West African countries can pursue economic growth through intra-regional trade and in partnership with the private sector. Africa currently has the lowest percentage of intra-regional trade in the world at 18%, compared with 70% in Europe, 55% in North America, 45% in Asia and 35% in Latin America.

•Pursue economic integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Developing integration through a borderless Africa would lay the foundation for a viable continental market to accelerate growth and allow Africa to be more competitive in global trade and value chains. It would also allow industries to develop across borders, creating economies of scale for investors as they look at wider integrated markets.

• Countries in West Africa should not disproportionately focus resources on the manufacturing sector, which is currently in a slump amid frail global demand, dented by protectionism, but focus on a policy fix has that include other sectors including agriculture, services and mining.

• Modernize the economy to attract competitiveness and investment in the private sector for economic development

• Create enabling business environment for small and medium-sized enterprises to thrive by making countries in West Africa a progressively easier place to do business by introducing several reforms.

• Provide investments to start and finish critical infrastructure projects in power, roads, and rail across the country, as well as direct

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investments in people to lift them up out or poverty.
• Develop infrastructure that is critical to the development of West Africa by creating new economic landscapes that are high value-added by harnessing the potential for public and private entrepreneurship. This means building dynamic export-oriented sectors using the continent's comparative advantage of abundant human and natural resources.

• Concentrate scarce infrastructure investment into strategic areas to drive dynamic comparative advantage in large international markets by facilitating local initiatives step by step over several decades

2. Addressing unemployment

The working-age population for West Africa, is trending upward, but the level of labour force participation appears to be static and high as compared with the Sub-Saharan African average. For example, Burkina Faso's rate was estimated at 83 percent in 2016, and the Sub-Saharan African average at only 70 percent. But West African rates have stalled, even falling slightly for some countries such as Benin's (rate declined from 72.4 percent in 2000 to 71.7 percent in 2016). As millions of young people join the labour market, the pressure to provide quality jobs will escalate. West Africa's labour market is dominated by the informal sector, which is a default option for a large majority of the unemployed youth and women.

• Develop an effective strategy for structural change that spans industries with and without smokestacks to solve the youth employment problem.

• Support the growing and innovative youth entrepreneurs with leadership development opportunities, finance, and links to wider markets.

• Include leadership, soft skills, and digital skills in training and education systems to increase the success of young job seekers.

• Encourage greater links between the private sector and education and training institutions. Young people must have access to educa-

tion and training that equips them with the skills employers need. Employers need to find ways to inform curriculums and support early employment opportunities as the first job often sets the path for a young person's career.
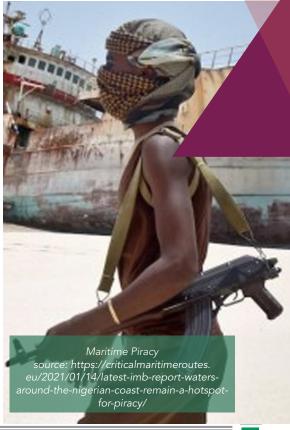
• Make financing small businesses and entrepreneurs easier by eliminating risk through digitization, alternative forms of finance, guarantees, and changing perceptions. Youth entrepreneurs perform just as well if not better than adult entrepreneurs—but they find it much harder to find financing.

• Leverage technology to drive impact and scale. We have found that education, training, employment job matching, and financing can be done effectively and affordably by leveraging technology as a delivery channel.

3. Addressing the spread of terrorism, cross border crimes, trafficking and maritime piracy

UNSCR 1373 of 28 September, 2001, request on Member States to implement a number of measures intended to enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities, taking steps to criminalize the financing of terrorism; freeze any funds related to persons

Maritime Piracy
source: https://criticalmaritimeroutes.
eu/2021/01/14/latest-imb-report-waters-
around-the-nigerian-coast-remain-a-hotspot-
for-piracy/

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involved in acts of terrorism; deny all forms of financial support for terrorist groups; suppress the provision of safe haven, sustenance or support for terrorists; share information with other governments on any groups preaching of planning terrorist acts; cooperate with other governments in the investigation, detection, arrest, extradition and prosecution of those involved in such acts; and criminalize active and passive assistance for terrorism in domestic law and bring violators to justice.

• Build regional alliances, promote space-based policies and support border regions.

• Countries should support bi-and multi-lateral training assistance programs, with support from regional and international partners, to enhance institutional and operational capacity. Utilizing the technology and capacity available through international partner organizations such as INTERPOL and the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme;

• Continue the joint military offensives launched by the countries of the region and their international allies have proved effective in managing the growing threat of terrorism in the region. Coordinated military intervention is critical in the periphery of states.

• Design territorial policies that considers the unique geography of the conflicts that affect them. These interventions should target border regions due to the cross-border nature of violence.

• West African states should pursue their efforts to build regional forces that can address the movement of violent extremist groups through the sharing of information and intelligence.

• Encourage regional collaboration and initiatives and support regional organisations such as ECOWAS, in close collaboration with UNODC, to address trafficking, piracy, and terrorism threats require solid regional initiatives and strong coordination with countries from outside the region (from North Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the United States).

• Use anti–money laundering mechanisms to control trafficking Additionally, countries should support regional initiatives such as the ECOWAS Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa.

• Encourage the sharing of and learning from successful examples from other parts of the world, particularly in relation to urban crime control, narcotics (from Latin America and the Caribbean), and antipiracy activities (from East Africa and East Asia).

• Harmonising legislation dealing with data protection, terrorism and transnational organized crime; developing and operationalizing a multi-agency approach through collaboration with and between police, financial intelligence units, customs, immigration, intelligence and customs; and,

Resource Management
• Better land management and addressing grievances linked to land access is needed.

• The boom in extractives discoveries requires greater attention to conflict risks, managing community and regional grievances as well as corruption.

Human Development
• Significant investments in basic and technical education are required to increase the size of the skilled labour force and improve livelihoods for youth.

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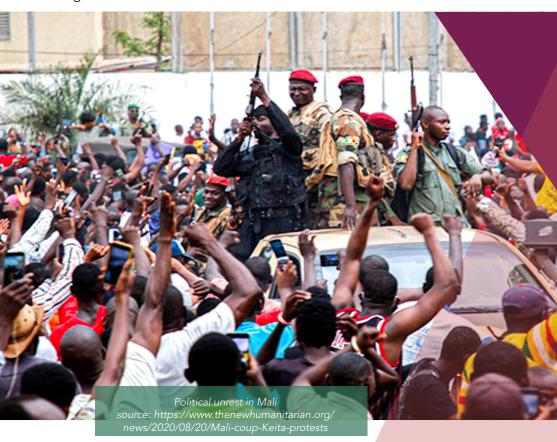
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

West Africa is a resource-based sub-regional economy that encountered waves of globalization, making it an important destination for global trade. West Africa is quickly evolving as one of the world's fastest growing regions. The sub-regional economy now governed by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with 15-member states, has an estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of almost US$1 trillion (World Gold Council, 2020). The three leading countries in ECOWAS economy, as global players are Nigeria, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. For a long time, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire for instance, dominate 60 percent of the global cocoa production, whiles Nigeria is a significant player in the global oil supply chain. West Africa's fast-growing population and markets present important opportunities for economic growth.

There is no doubt that the West African economy is very critical for global economy stability. West African countries such as Senegal, Niger, Chad, Mali, Togo, Burkina Faso, to mention a few, complement the efforts of Nigeria, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, the three leading West African countries in some of the global commodity supply chains. A US$1 trillion regional economy is almost the 10th largest economy in the world which deserves protection for global security and peace.

The development story of the West African Sub-region has however, been a mixed one. On one hand, the region is made of beautiful and well-resourced nations with abundance of natural resources in the form of gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, and oil. Ghana for example has been a leading producer of gold in the world for decades and is comparable in terms of gold volume production, to

South Africa on the African continent. In terms of agriculture and forest reserves, some of the countries in the region rock shoulders with global leading countries in the production of commodities like cocoa, coffee, rubber, shea, cashew nuts and timber. For a long time, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire for instance, have led the world in the production of cocoa. However, these positive narrations have been marred by the persistent collapse of the governance systems in most of these countries together with the rise in insecurity in the region.

Political unrest in Mali
source: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/
news/2020/08/20/Mali-coup-Keita-protests

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Introduction

The Region has been plagued with years of persistent and unre-
solved crimes leading to severe cases of insecurity, threats to life
and property. After several years of political unrests between main
governments of the day and opposition parties, nations like
Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, etc. have all been plunged at one
stage or the other into chaos. Lives and properties have been lost,
people have been impoverished and dreams have been cut short.
Most worrying in all these, is the uncertainty that lies ahead for many
a citizen who wish to embrace peace and chart a new life of growth and
prosperity for themselves, their families and loved ones. The
African Union and the Region's umbrella organization, the ECOWAS
(Economic Community for West African States) have all not been
able to significantly help nip this canker in the bud. The resultant
effect of this phenomenon has been the erosion of the gains made
from years of socio-economic development of these states. Recent
surge of insecurity in the region owing to political disturbances (par-
ticularly on elections), violent extremisms and terrorism have given
cause for worry to a lot of development agents in Africa and the
world over.

The nature of crime and insecurity in the West African Sub-region
is one that stems from different developmental lapses. The desire
of political leaders in the region to hang on to power beyond their
stipulated tenures, perceived corruption on the side of the political
elite and public officials, tribal conflicts, cross-border crimes are all
but some of the examples of the problems leading to insecurity in
the region. In most recent times (at least within the past decade or
two), the drivers of the region's insecurity could be summarized as
the following: political instability, corruption, border crimes, violent
extremism, terrorism, lapses in internal security architecture, excesses
from civil activism on social media, drug trafficking.

According to some research studies on the security situation in the
sub-region, West Africa is a paradise for organized crime, offering
ideal conditions for trafficking contraband: a strategic location, po-
rous borders, weak governance, wide-spread poverty and extensive
corruption. As a result, criminals and insurgents are exploiting the

*End Sars protest
source:
https://www.premiumtimesng.com*

region. West Africa serves as a transit point between Latin America and Europe for US$ 1 billion-worth in cocaine, as a destination for counterfeit medicines and toxic waste, and as a source of stolen natural resources, particularly oil. Human trafficking, whether for forced labour or sexual exploitation, also occurs in the region (UNODC 2010b: 31). After years of failed governance in most of the countries in the region, poverty is endemic with unemployment figures rising by the years. The few that have found themselves in the top political offices are perceived to amass wealth from the nations' resources for their individual benefits. This phenomenon exacerbates the insecurity situation by pushing the poor and vulnerable in so-

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There is no doubt that the West African economy is very critical for global economy stability

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cieties to fall prey to criminals who promise them better lives by engaging in one criminal activity or the other.

Recent examples of some form of breakdown in the internal security of countries like Nigeria in the case of "End SARS demonstrations"; Mali civil protests demanding the ousting of their president around July 2020 coupled with jihadist insurgency which first emerged in the year 2012 and the March wide spread demonstration in Senegal following the arrest of opposition leader Ousmane Songo, are clear signals of trouble in the sub-region. A country like Ghana with relatively stable societies in terms of security over the years, is having its own share of heightened security concerns in recent times (at least in this 4th Republic). Electoral violence such as what happened during bi-elections at Ayawaso West Wuogon in Accra and the 2016 Techiman presidential and parliamentary election disturbances which sadly led to deaths of certain individuals is a cause of worry for development actors. Most recent surge in calls for demonstrations amongst the public to hold leadership to account on a number of development issues and some clashes between the security forces and demonstrators are also raising concerns for better management of riots in Ghana.

The worrying internal security challenges of Ghana for instance coupled with the growing border security challenges with its neighbours like Burkina Faso could have dire consequences in maintaining security for life and property. Years of failed attempts to help West African states like Mali to address extreme terrorism and the existing weak security systems have led to the situation where neighboring countries like Burkina Faso and Niger have had their national security infiltrated by these criminal armed groups. These examples call for a more coordinated effort by the West African nations under ECOWAS and even the AU to use all reasonable force and resources to address the security situation in the sub-region. The complex nature of the development of the insecurity situation in the region, calls for empirical research and analysis into the security happenings (both in-country and cross border) to situate the discussions in proper perspectives to aid the conceptualization of probable alternative solutions.

Research Objectives and Scope

Under the Good Governance Africa, West Africa Centre's (GGA-WARO) "peace and security in the West African Sub-region" focal area, the Centre considered it beneficial to delve into the causal factors fanning the insecurity situation in the region, find entry points to discuss the subject and find solutions and promote good security governance practices that will help check such situations going forward. The Centre is of the firm conviction that commissioning a research to understand the security challenges of African countries particularly those in the West African Sub-region, will provide a great chance to strengthen the collective knowledge to develop these countries to address the basic needs of the people. This research being commissioned by GGA-WARO is therefore a contribution of the Centre to help put in better perspective, the security situation in the region and help promote discourses based on findings and recommendations to identify lasting solutions to the insecurity in the sub-region.

Main tasks of the assignment include:
(a) Review the security situation in the West African Sub-region and breakdown the different elements giving rise to insecurity in the region.

(b) Ascertain mechanisms, processes and pathways that could be adopted to address the insecurity situation in the sub-region (this should be looked at both in-country and across borders).

(c) Propose dialogue entry points for policy makers, think tanks and other actors to debate the subject of insecurity in West Africa as a contribution to the search for lasting peace for the region and Africa as a whole.

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Research Methodology

The research relied extensively on the use of secondary material with majority of the source material published since 2010. The approach was to identify source materials using keyword searches, from our own knowledge or that of other experts in the area of peace and security studies. The snowball method was used to follow up on citations mentioned in the literature on peace and security in West Africa. Through this process, over 80 books and journal articles (listed in the bibliography). In order to maintain a degree of rigour, the search focused attention to publications from international organisations, peer-reviewed journals and books from academic publishers, avoiding 'grey literature' and journalism where possible. The review placed emphasis on the security happenings and probable solution for the identified study areas of Ghana and West Africa.

Report Structure

The report starts with the introduction followed by an overview of the regional and country context. The third section presents the analysis of the overarching conflict dynamics, highlighting the key challenges in West Africa and Ghana. It then focuses on the specific drivers, offering a granular analysis of the issues of concern, and the prominent actors who affect conflict trends. The report then outlines the counterbalancing factors that work for peace in both contexts. It concludes with strategic recommendations.

Chapter 2
REGIONAL AND COUNTRY CONTEXTS

West Africa

The region of West Africa includes the southern portion of the bulge of the continent, which extends westward to the Atlantic Ocean. The region has an estimated land area of 8 million square kilometres covering 17 countries. The West Africa UN sub-region includes the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. The sub-region covers approximately one quarter of Africa, and contains a broad range of ecosystems, bioclimatic regions, and habitats from rain forest to desert .

The West African sub-region has an estimated population of 416 million as at 2020. The region's population is unevenly distributed, reflecting differences in the physical environment as well as the history of human settlement in the arid northern part of the region, where only a small, sparse population can be sustained. In the arable regions, where soils are fertile and the climate is favourable for crop cultivation, higher population densities are found. The population density of West Africa shows higher population densities in Nigeria than in any other West African country. Indeed, almost half of West Africans are Nigerian, and with over 172 million inhabitants. The remaining 16 countries account for the other half of the West African population, with Ghana coming in at a distant second (7.5 percent of West Africa's population) .

West Africa recorded an average growth rate estimated at 3.6 percent in 2019 which is 0.2 percentage points higher than the preceding year. Even though growth rate in West Africa has slightly increased since the slowdown in 2016, this is far from uniform across the region.

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West Africa has consistently been the third fastest growing region in Africa, lagging behind East Africa and North Africa, although it has seen growth accelerate in more countries than in other regions, since 2018. In 2018, six out of the 10 fastest-growing economies in Africa were in West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin and Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal were among the 10 fast growing economies in the world). Economic growth in the region since 2018 has been impressive, recording a significant level in reduction of the poverty level though leading to widening inequality. Inequality is also rife in the provision of public services such as education and healthcare. The paucity of public service provision is spread across many countries in the sub region. In Mali women from rich families are 15 times more likely to have education than those from poor families. The situation is not so different in Nigeria and Ghana where a

> *In 2018, six out of the 10 fastest-growing economies in Africa were in West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin and Guinea*

woman from a poor family is 26 times more likely never to have been in school as compared with a woman from a rich family. In Ghana, a girl from a poor family is 14 times likely never to have been to school than one from a rich family. On school enrolment, many of the West African countries have made improvements over the last two decades but the retention rates remain low. The inability of pupils to stay in school and successfully complete their primary education remains a challenge for most countries in the region. The cumulative dropout rate to the last grade of primary and lower secondary education is above 25 percent in majority of countries with Benin, Liberia and Sierra Leone exceeding 50 percent.

Labour force participation rate for the working population has consistently declined from 6.2 percent in 2000 to 58.5 percent in 2019 and is expected to further decline to 58.2 percent in 2022. The decline is reflected in lower wage employment existing alongside high informal employment across the region.

West Africa is home to some of Africa's most stable countries (Ghana, Senegal), and several countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone) successfully transitioned from war to peace. However, traditional and new drivers of conflict are hampering the capacity of countries to improve life conditions and strengthen human security. Presently, the region is struggling to address the implications of the strains of long-term economic decline and poor governance systems. Many countries struggle with poor leadership that has been facilitated and enabled by weak institutions of government. The sub-region suffers from the consequences of intrastate conflicts, the spread of terrorism and violent extremist groups, increasing rate of unemployment, persistent and unresolved crimes, clashes between farmers and herders, and growing dictatorship among the ruling elites in some countries.

Many of the countries in the sub-region have introduced democratic political systems since 1992 with many of them having organised more than one election. In 2020, more than five of the region's countries organised presidential election, including the Francophone states of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. These two elections bear three interesting

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similarities. First is the manipulation of the constitution by the presidents to extend their stay in power. Secondly, the election disputes and post-election unrests led by opposition after the declaration of result, and lastly, ethnic polarisation by the political elites. The tension in both countries pose serious threats to the West African region's stability, as we may see some spill over effects that could translate into cross-border conflicts with complex underlying factors.

Ghana

The Republic of Ghana sits on the Atlantic Ocean and borders Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. It has a population of about 29.6 million (2018). Ghana has been considered a peaceful country not affected by widespread nation-wide violent conflict. It, however, experiences sporadic violence relating to land, chieftaincy, natural resource exploitation, illegal small-scale mining and armed violence. The country is administratively divided into 16 regions and 216 districts, with three tiers of sub-national government (regional, district and sub-district). Three types of assemblies are present at the district level - Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. Ghana has eight main ethnic groups (Akan, Ga-Dangme, Ewe, Guan, Gurma, Mole-Dagbani, Grusi, and Mande) distributed across the sixteen regions. The largest is the Akan, with 47.5% of the total population and residing in the central and coastal areas; followed by the Mole-Dagban characterising the North and the Ewe who are predominant in the Volta region. The two main religions are Christianity (71.2%) and Islam (17.6%), with the latter concentrated in the northern parts.

Ghana is a stable democracy and has taken major strides in this direction under a multi-party system with a separation of powers involving the Executive, Parliament and an independent judiciary. It has held eight successive peaceful and credible general elections under the 4th Republic constitution since 1992. It further strengthened its record in democratic governance with the 3rd peaceful transition of power, on 7 January 2017, from the incumbent to the opposition

Ghanaian Voter exercising his constitutional mandate in the 2020 presidential elections
source: dw.com

within this period. Ghana consistently ranks in the top three countries in Africa for freedom of expression and media freedom.

Additionally, Ghana has built up an overall infrastructure for peace, encompassing the National Peace Council (NPC) and the Regional Peace Councils (RPCs), which have proven effective in strengthening Ghana's resilience by promoting peace discourse across ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts, as well as in facilitating national peace accords ahead of the 2012 and 2016 Presidential elections. Moreover, peace infrastructure in Ghana is reinforced by participation in the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaties of 1993 and 1999, and periodic educational campaigns on peace, especially during general elections. Civil society in Ghana is vibrant and is provided with the necessary space, and civil society organisations are engaged in local development as well as advocacy. Participation continues to rate high and growing in the governance indices of the country.

The UN Common Country Assessment (CCA, 2016) identifies the following key inequalities in the country – gender, wealth, region, area and education. It sought to address four fundamental development challenges: 1) persistent vertical and horizontal inequalities (gender, urban-rural and north-south); 2) low productivity, with dependence on commodity exports; 3) burgeoning youth population which could spur growth but in the absence of quality education and job creation exacerbates social tensions; 4) environmental degradation and vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Ghana's continued success in managing electoral processes and its well-regarded peace architecture is coming under stress due to increasing political polarization coupled with proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW), increased Islamic radicalization and growing numbers of unemployed, frustrated young Ghanaians. The growing sense of political exclusion and marginalization has led to sporadic electoral violence and pervasive political vigilantism. These challenges to the national security and peace architectures is of increasing grave concern as it makes Ghana vulnerable to rising

violent extremism and terror attacks in nearby countries.

Summary

In recent years, West Africa has become an epicentre for illegal activities associated with drugs, firearms and human trafficking, but most important-ly these strains are not independent of existing challenges that are fuelled by poor governance and weak institutions.

On the contrary, Ghana continues to remain a peaceful country but several issues of contention are present with the possibility to undermine the peace and stability of the country. Some of these issues often escalates but remain at the local level and do not trigger a national mobilization. The fundamentals for peace and development is good for Ghana but unfortunately the country is positioned in a turbulent sub-region in which emerging threats combine with existing fault lines to change the dynamics for sustainable peace.

Post-election protest in Accra -Ghana source: africanews.com

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Chapter 3
CONFLICT AND SECURITY DYNAMICS

Drivers of insecurity

West Africa's complex security challenges are a function of several broad factors which will be reviewed in this section. With intrastate conflicts dominating the conflict landscape in West Africa, the discussion will be categorized into internal threats and challenges, and external dimensions. The first section explains the internal drivers of fragility and violence in West Africa and Ghana. The regional dimensions and the external dynamics that drive insecurity are further discussed focusing on the vulnerabilities inherent in both the internal and external factors that interrelate to pose a persistent threat to regional security, stability and development.

Internal threat and challenges to the peace and security of West Africa cut across three levels of regional, national and sub-state. Internal drivers of fragility in West Africa are characterized by the lack of clarity around land ownership, the neglect and the marginalization of peripheral regions, which are also often border regions, and the demographic challenge posed by an increasingly youthful population demanding greater inclusion, in particular through jobs and livelihood opportunities. Many of these drivers are recurring and lead to violence but this analysis place emphasis on the strains that pose greater threats with ramifications for stability at the national, sub-national and sub-regional levels.

Economic Growth Amidst Increasing Poverty and Widening Inequality
A critical driver that pertains at the national level is related to economic growth, deepening inequality and rising frustration with

the state. In the sub-region many countries have introduced policies that are aimed at pursing positive growth in many sectors. Economic growth driven by extractive industries has remained robust in the post-2000 period across the West Africa sub-region. Indicators for 2019 point to many West African countries having recorded economic growth prior to Covid-19. Countries like Cape Verde and Liberia have been performing poorly over the years even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. This is primarily due to the socioeconomic instability that confronts these countries. Majority of the countries in West Africa have recorded increases in national wealth (Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina, Ghana, Nigeria).

The economic gains present an enormous opportunity to improve the lives of the many, but unfortunately much of it benefits only a select few leading to wid-ening inequality and poverty. Inequalities between rural and urban populations are particularly notice-able in West Africa across different social indicators. West African Governments have been blamed for the worsening poverty and inequality levels in their countries. This situation is attributed to the under-funding of public services such as healthcare and education. With poverty intensified by persistent inequality and social stratification, many countries in the sub-region are more likely to suffer from instability since the vast majority of the population are denied the most essential elements of a dignified life, such as quality education, healthcare and decent jobs. The effects of COVID-19 have further eroded the gains of economic growth with severe implications for the stability of the region. Pre-pandemic economic growth estimates predicted a 4.0 percent expansion in 2020 for the West Africa region. Growth in the region

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is likely to be affected through a combination of channels, including decline in commodity prices, low financial flows, reduced tourism earnings and heightened volatility in financial markets.

Successive governments in Ghana have introduced economic policies to produce accelerated growth and improve the standard of living. With the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 2007 and an average economic growth rate of 7% per annum, Ghana became a lower middle-income country (LMIC) in 2010. Its economy continued to expand in 2019, with real GDP growth estimated at 7.1%. High growth momentum since 2017 has consistently placed Ghana among Africa's 10 fastest-growing economies. Non-oil growth was expected to accelerate to 6% as the new policies in the agriculture sector and the promotion of agribusiness begin to take effect. The HDI for Ghana has recorded significant gains since 2015, putting it into the medium human development category. The country made substantial progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), having achieved the first MDG of reducing the national poverty rate by more than half, from 52.7% in 1991 to 24.2% in 2012. Ghana has shown commitment towards attaining the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals as per Agenda 2030. Despite claims of middle income-status, the situation in the many areas of the country does not demonstrate inclusive development leading to perceived marginalisation of the area. Economic growth has produced strains on communities in Northern Ghana leading to North-South disparities with the state unable to fulfil its responsibilities, and act as an engine of development. The high unrealistic and unmet expectations are more likely to lead to frustration among a more conscious population who may become aggressive and potentially resort to violence to demand for more public services from the state.

The strains associated with economic growth has resulted in frustrations with the state. Human development gap has broadened and more people do not enjoy the wealth that comes with growth. In many countries in the sub-region, the population has become more demanding with high expectations on the state. The prolonged inequality over time leads to social exclusion that can generate the

Dilapidated school building in the Northern part of Ghana-source: bridgingpost.com

conditions in which conflict can arise. This can range from civil unrest to violent armed conflict and terrorist activity. In Mali, the 2020 coup was preceded by months of violent protest organised by a group of organisations known as the June 5 Movement. In Nigeria, the End SARS social movement against police brutality led to the death of 56 people across Nigeria. When mobilisations by severely disadvantaged groups crystallise around shared characteristics of ethnicity or religion, they are more likely to draw on violence to claim their rights and redress inequalities. Group differences are not enough in themselves to cause conflict, but social exclusion and horizontal inequalities provide fertile ground for violent mobilisation. The increasing trend of public protest in West Africa driven by genuine grievances against cost of living and infrastructure provision leads to frustration among the citizenry and encourages disaffection for the state.

Natural Resource Conflicts

West Africa has become a favourable location for the extraction of natural resources. While natural resources have the potential to finance development, they also have the potential to catalyse violent conflict. The localised nature of resource discoveries interacts with sub-national identities to create security vulnerabilities. Natural resource conflicts form around land, water and water resources, oil, solid minerals

> *Group differences are not enough in themselves to cause conflict, but social exclusion and horizontal inequalities provide fertile ground for violent mobilisation.*

and pastoralism. The mismanagement of resources, greed and grievance have immeasurable implications on national security, national growth and development.

Tensions over resources and territory between various communities continued to increase. In West Africa, inter-community conflicts are most commonly observed between farmers and herders, and between natives and non-natives of a region. Land and resourced based disputes are also common in Ghana. Multiple land sales in urban areas and the activities of land guards who offer protection to the different claimants on land constitute a major security issue in Ghana.

Intra-community conflicts, which take place within the same community, are very often linked to matters of chiefs' succession, rivalries between individuals or family groups, conflicts over religious or political leadership positions, and so on. In Burkina Faso, the violent crisis between various ethnic groups on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic group, on the other hand, and Islamist groups as a third party, escalated to a limited war. For instance, on March 2, 2020, suspected Koglweogo burned down the Fulani villages of Dinguila-Peulh, Barga, and Ramdolla-Peulh, Nord region, killing at least 43 villagers and displacing many others. Similarly, in Mali, the limited war between the Dogon and Bambara ethnic communities, the Fulani ethnic community, and Islamist groups continued. In 2020, the rival parties were responsible for at least 700 deaths in at least 236 confirmed violent confrontations in the Mopti and Segou regions. Furthermore, approximately 80,000 persons were internally displaced. In Nigeria, the limited war between various farming communities and mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists continued, resulting in more than 740 fatalities. The states most affected were Kaduna, Benue, Delta, Plateau, Kogi, Edo, and Ondo. Recent events in the tri-border area in the central Sahel, Nigeria reveals that intercommunal violence is becoming a "bedrock of recruitment" for terrorists and armed groups.

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In Ghana chieftaincy conflicts are prevalent in the northern part of the country particularly in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions. Chieftaincy disputes arise due to no proper guidelines for succession. Recent statistics reveal the decline in chieftaincy conflicts based on intensity and location due to the strengthening of the Judiciary Committee of both the National and Regional House of Chiefs. Land commodification, urbanisation and the advent of land grabs, have seen chiefs reworking customary norms and land laws to facilitate large scale land transaction to the detriment of marginalised social groups. In the areas of Nkoranza and Ejura, such land grabs have been contested by both natives and settler farmers leading to conflict that escalates into violence.

Natural resource (mis)management has become the fulcrum, around which several conflicts revolve in Ghana. In some instances, these have also been compounded by changing climatic impacts, leading to increasingly scarce arable land for farming and grazing. A case in point are the farmer/herder conflicts that afflict all parts of Ghana and strain inter-communal relations. Conflict between farmers and herders are recorded in several communities in northern Ghana and the middle forest zones of Agogo, Kumawu and Sekyrere-Afram Plains. Across Ghana, but increasingly so in the northernmost regions where climatic changes negatively impact on vegetation and water resources, community leaders are concerned about the frequency of clashes between herders, commonly perceived to be of the Fulani group and farmers. These clashes are mutating into other forms of more violent incidents with the presence of small arms of both local manufacture and industrial-grade weapons, especially AK47s, and cattle rustling across international boundaries to Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

There are transnational dimensions to the illegal/criminal economies beginning to emerge comprising: cattle rustling, harvesting of rosewood and other species of wood logging activities, and the charcoal trade that together are compounded by the presence of small arms. Particularly, activities related to logging and commercial firewood harvesting for charcoal bring about environmental degradation

with ominous consequences. These criminal networks were 'often aided by…officials of the Forestry Commission in the region [who] provided the wood merchants with conveyances, which allowed them to transport the product to the market.

Another area of concern that is captured in this review is the rapid development of the extractives industry, which, if not well managed, creates opportunities for rent capture and generates more grievances than benefits at the local level. Situations of unequal distribution of resource rents can blend with ethnic marginalisation or religious cleavages to escalate violence in mining communities. In Mali, and Niger, the Tuareg insurgency centres around grievance on the equitable share of mining revenues. Ghana is experiencing a fast growing artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) that is taking over farm lands in many areas of the country. The spread of ASM in Ghana is fuelled by destructive practices and weak government controls. ASM provide jobs for the unemployed youth who migrate to the mining towns. Majority of the individuals who move to this sector are poverty-driven, from families trying to earn enough to survive, unemployed youth and farmers supplementing their income.

Illegal mining sites have become a destination for many young West Africans from Nigeria, La Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The northern Ghanaian town of Dollar Power has many West African illegal miners, including Ivorian former rebels and Burkinabe nationals, and is known for armed robbery. In eastern Burkina Faso, gold from some mining sites controlled by violent extremist groups is purchased by buyers from Benin and Togo. If care is not taken, terrorists may move to work at the mining sites at Dollar

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Power providing valuable funding to terror groups.

Ghana's gold mining sector create insecurities across all human security dimensions. All sorts of crimes occur on illegal ASM sites: illegal possession of weapons, use and sale of narcotics, and robbery among others. The migration of youth from the sub-region to work at the ASM sites constitute a potential source of funding for radical extremist groups in Ghana and other West African countries. There are discernible negative changes that these activities bring to the communities. The growth of ASM activities in the North is driving tensions among Chiefs who clash over the payment of royalties by the mining companies. The influx of the Chinese and other West African nationals has raised tensions in mining communities and in some cases led to violent protests. The use of assorted illicit weapons in mining areas across the country. Additionally, large quantities of weapons (including pump action guns) are believed to have been left behind by deported Chinese illegal miners for their allies, including police personnel, particularly in the Ashanti, Eastern and Western Regions.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is increasing at an alarming rate in the West African Sahel region due to the poor farming practices which is compounded by the effects of climate change. –Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal – leading to a staggering 67% surge in hunger. This continues to be one of the fastest growing hunger crises in the world. In the Sahel and the Central African Republic, 17.4 million people are now living in crisis levels of food insecurity or worse – that is 6.6 million more than last year. Conflict is a key driver of hunger. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Northern Nigeria and the Central African Republic (CAR), are the hardest hit, with hunger levels in Burkina Faso alone rising by more than 200% between 2019 and 2020 and expected to reach 317% by the end of the current lean season. Violence in the central Sahel and Lake Chad basin has forced 5.3 million people to flee their homes and lose everything.

Children in Chad provided with food under the world food programme
source: www.wfp.org/countries/chad

"People in the region have been hit by three lethal Cs –conflict, covid-19 and climate, which together led to catastrophic rise in poverty and hunger. Displaced families are hosted by communities who are already struggling to feed themselves. Social services and humanitarian aid are disrupted because of insecurity."

The Oxfam report also describes how economic shocks, particularly aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic, and the worsening climate crisis have combined with conflict to push tens of millions of people into hunger. Mass unemployment and severely disrupted food production have led to a 10 percent surge in food prices in West Africa - the highest rise in five years. Unpredictable weather extremes have become more frequent and severe. In the Sahel, the number

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of floods has increased by 180% since 2015, destroying the homes, crops and livestock of 1.7 million people last year alone. In other countries in West Africa, hunger has also intensified in emerging epi-centres, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia where respective-ly 22% and 20% of their pop-ulation are battling with hun-ger proportions never seen before. The economic fallout from the pandemic increased food prices while reducing household incomes and their ability to access food.

Complex challenges of youth unemployment and urbanisation

Youth unemployment fuels conflict and crime, both of which then in turn increase unemployment still further by their effects on economic performance, investor con-fidence and social, physical and institutional structures. Current levels of unemploy-ment and under employ-ment among young men and women in West Africa constitute a political-security concern. Analysis of the cor-

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In many countries, the magnitude of the situation and the potential for conflict depends on the ability of the economy to absorb and productively employ the youth.

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relation between violence and large youthful populations suffering from widespread exclusion combined with rapid urban population growth points to increased vulnerability to conflict. It is estimated that there may be 430 million people living in West Africa in 2020, involving an increase of over 100 million inhabitants in just 15 years. As the Sahel and West Africa Club puts it, "this demographic growth will be embodied by the predominance of youth seeking employment; increased urbanisation; pressure on land and food security, socioeconomic infrastructure needs for an expanding population; heightened migratory movements etc."

In many countries, the magnitude of the situation and the potential for conflict depends on the ability of the economy to absorb and productively employ the youth. Closely associated to this issue is the youth bulge problem that drives the possibility of low intensity conflicts. Insecurity arising from youth budge are driven by lack of opportunities for young people that arise due to failing economic development; high youth unemployment rates; limited education and training opportunities; and low access to participation in governance. Drawing on the events in North Africa, it is revealed that the presence of high levels of unemployment alongside low levels of public satisfaction with government is more likely to increase citizens' disposition to public political protest to make their displeasure known by their leaders. In contexts where democratic liberties are limited, this would almost inevitably imply violent clashes.

The use of technology, internet and social media has increased significantly in West Africa. The security challenge is the likelihood of extremist groups, who have also increased their presence on the social media landscape, to use the medium for propaganda, radicalisation, communication and recruitment and incitement of youth to commit terrorist attacks. Other youth in their quest to use the internet and social media may fall prey to violent extremist messaging, cybercrimes and pornography.

Insecurity across West Africa and the Sahel has expanded into urban centers. Urbanisation is now a security problem in many countries of

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West Africa. Many of the countries in the sub-region are experiencing intensive urbanisation with this phenomenon affecting the region's largest towns and small urban centres alike. The enormous size of urban populations and more significantly, the rapidity with which urban areas have been and are growing in West Africa have severe social, economic and physical repercussions. This rapid pace of urbanization is creating a new locus of fragility in many West African states—as evidenced by the burgeoning slums around many of the region's urban areas—and the accompanying rise in violence, organized crime, and the potential for instability. These evolving threats, in turn, have profound implications for Africa's security sector. The accelerated growth of urbanisation has amplified the demand for key services consequently affecting the provision of shelter and basic services such as water and sanitation, education, public health, employment and transport

Over the years, the incidences of crime and the degree of violence have increased tremendously in a number of West African cities. Crime and violence increasingly accompany deprivation. Therefore, the general problems of poverty and social exclusion within urban areas, extreme weaknesses of national police and justice systems and absence of trust between communities and local governments compound the challenge of increasing insecurity. Many cities experience a wide range of criminal activities ranging from the petty to the armed and organized. Theft is the most common crime, but some criminal gangs have graduated to drug trafficking and money laundering. Crime is also facilitated by the anonymous character of the big city, and by such institutional weaknesses as poor pay and inadequate training of police, and by deficiencies in essential infrastructure such as streetlights. Women, the elderly and the weak are easy victims of all kinds of crime. Urban insecurity is, however, not limited to these vulnerable groups. Insecurity is widespread and felt by a high proportion of citizens.

In Ghana, the share of the population living in urban areas increased from 20% to 56.71% during 1990–2019. The speed with which urban populations have grown has far outpaced the institutional

*Residents of Agbogbloshie pelting police vehicles with stones. Others crouch to avoid bullets fired by the police.
source: williammartinmedia.com*

> " *when city authorities attempt to enforce the rules on land-use, it leads to conflict between residents and the authorities.* "

capacity to manage it. The central characteristic of the urbanisation challenge is not the scale of population growth, but the scale of the mismatch between demographic change and institutional change. Government policies and interventions have not been responsive to the needs of most of the urban dwellers. The rapid expansion of new residential areas in urban centres do not follow physical development laws as stipulated in the Local Governance Act 936, 2017. However, when city authorities attempt to enforce the rules on land-use, it leads to conflict between residents and the authorities.

Millions of people live in appalling slum conditions in the vastly expanding cities of the region, where the numbers of unemployed youth rise year after year at a prodigious rate. In addition to the demographic growth rate (Niger has the world's highest rate of births per woman, 8.0, and some other West African countries are almost as high, one of the key factors behind urban unemployment in West Africa is the exodus from rural areas on the part of

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millions of young men and women. In Burkina Faso, for instance, 93% of migrants to cities are young people under 35 years in search of employment. The reality behind this phenomenon is under-employment and lack of possibilities in rural areas. Cross-border recruitment of young people for armed conflict is all too common in the arc of territory extending from Guinea-Bissau to Cote d'Ivoire.

Security Sector Governance

A review of the security provision of the state shows the role played by diverse institutions in West Africa and Ghana. In West Africa the challenges of the security sector are diverse and partly to do with the transition from rigid authoritarian regimes to more transparent, participatory governance. In Burkina Faso, the security sector is highly fragmented with two ministries in charge of security and national Defence. In 2017 Burkina Faso launched a security sector reform (SSR) process led by the National Defence and Security Council (CSDN).

Ghana has multiple security institutions that have functioned since the post-independence period. How such institutions serve societies and their communities is closely related to the type, quality and value of oversight institutions, mechanisms and processes that have been established to govern them. The country has multiple security and intelligence services that collectively provide a protective shield for the people and the state. These include: The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) (the army, navy and air force); Ghana Police Service (GPS) ; Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) , Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) , Customs, Excise & Preventive Service (CEPS) ; Intelligence organizations namely: the Bureau for National Investigation (BNI) ; Defence Intelligence (DI), and the Research Department (RD) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); the Penal system: comprising the Prisons Service and Judiciary; the Forestry Commission and the Executive, Parliament, and the Judiciary. All these institutions come together to form the National Security Architecture (NSA).

The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana discusses executive control and leadership of the NSA. Under the existing NSA, Regional

and District Security Councils function below the National Security Council and established under Act 526 of 1996. These organs are in charge of implementing government security policy pertaining to the regional and district levels. Their roles are to: provide early warning to Government of the existence or likelihood of any security threat to the region, or the country or to the Government; and perform such functions of the National Security Council as the Council may assign to it. Regular reporting systems ensure situation reports and memos from the districts are sent up to the REGSEC and then to National Security Council. Feedback and command systems also filter down to the DISEC through REGSEC from the National Security Council. Both Defence Intelligence and Research Department are not members of either REGSEC or DISEC.

There are identified challenges with the security sector. Two Acts are relevant for this discussion. These are Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 1996 (Act 526) relating to the intelligence services and The Police Service Act, 1970 (Act 350) for the Police Service. The security is beset with many challenges some of which have been persistent for decades limiting the effectiveness of the sector to perform its mandate. The GPS faces undue political pressure that brings its independence into question. Political control of law enforcement agencies undermines their operational and professional independence; Inadequate resource allocation for the performance of identified duties and functions is a recurring issue. Resource constraints do not only affect the content and quality of training, but also the quality and diversity of logistical resources available ;

Politicised recruitment into the security agencies is affecting their effectiveness as people with dubious character who are not fit to work in the security agencies are enlisted. Duplication of institutional roles leads to turf wars. Several agencies are tasked with roles that conflict with that of others, yet little operational protocols exist to ensure collaboration. For example, the GIS deals with human trafficking issues, and so does the GPS and the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO). Also, the Narcotics Control

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Commission (NACOM) and Drug Law Enforcement Unit (DLEU) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) both deal with narcotic cases; EOCO deals with cybercrimes and money laundering, same as GPS and yet collaborations are ineffective or non-existent. Similarly, policies and programmes of agencies on the criminal justice spectrum are couched in silos with little consideration on their implications on others.

Religious Extremism and Terrorism

Religious extremism and terrorism have emerged as a growing threat in West Africa, with groups such as Boko Haram targeting civilians in increasingly deadly attacks . Evidence of the spread cuts across the entire West African sub-region. Analysis of attacks in Burkina Faso from 2015 to 2019 shows that attacks have steadily increased in frequency, lethality, and sophistication. Presently, West Africa region is home to three major and well-trained jihadist groups: the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), regularly referred to as Boko Haram, and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), which is linked to al-Qaeda. The increase in deadly attacks on traditionally perceived secure locations highlights the increasing deadly reach of these groups which originated in the Sahel interior.

The Sahel experienced continuous attacks by IS and al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist militants, resulting in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of displaced people in Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Burkina Faso has been struggling to secure its northern border against jihadist incursion since 2014 and the revolution which led to the toppling of President Compaoré has exacerbated the problem. Nigeria continues to witness Islamist militant attacks in the North undertaken by the two main Boko Haram affiliated groups, Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS).

Mali released a large number of Jihadist fighters from prison. Those released are estimated to give ISGS and JNIM an extra 10 percent,

potentially more, fighting men. In addition to the extra manpower, it is also believed that those released include veteran fighters, with many experienced tacticians, including those behind the coordinated and sophisticated attacks on hotels in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Additionally, alongside the prisoner release, it is believed that Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) received anywhere between 12 and 35 million USD in ransom sums. Such funding enables the group to continue to buy arms and fund its campaigns against various West African governments.

On the whole, the situation is precarious with the jihadists gradually consolidating their hold in the Sahel and are successfully posing a threat to the coastal West African nations. Coastal West African states are considered favourable targets from a financial, ideological and "fame" point of view. Coastal West African states contain a number of high-profile targets, both those perceived as western and un-Islamic. Such targets include mining operations, such as Guinea's lucrative Bauxite mines, which provide 95% of the country's export earning, or Ghana's gold mines which provide over 5% of the countries annual GDP and nearly 40% of its total exports, hotels, foreign business, and even western individuals. Cities such as Cotonou and Porto Novo in Benin; Lomé, in Togo; Accra, and Takoradi in Ghana and further attacks in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivo-

Spanish Special Forces training Mauritanian soldiers during a counterterrorism exercise in Mauritania
source: nytimes.com

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ire, would all likely be seen as valid targets.

While Islamic militant organizations are presumed responsible for most of the violence in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, they are not the only actors involved. Self-defence groups and other non-Islamic violent actors are also on the rise. These actors have been responsible for civilian executions, largely directed against the Fulani ethnic group. Ethnic conflict appears to be increasing in Burkina Faso and will most likely continue to increase. The increasing ethnic conflict in Burkina Faso is directly related to the Insurgency. Although the attacks by the Jihadists groups in Mali and Burkina Faso are all connected in one way or another, the current violence is not uniform and can be divided into three general types: (a) High-value Strategic Attacks: these attacks began with the Splendid Hotel and Cappuccino restaurant attack in 2016. Since then, one annual attack of high strategic value has occurred every year. One specific actor or group is likely responsible. (b) Border-zone Insurgency: These attacks began with the formation of Ansar al-Islam in 2016 and have organically grown into a full-fledged insurgency in the northern and eastern border regions. A web of interconnected Islamic militant organizations is largely responsible, and (c) Inter-Ethnic Conflict & General Violence: These attacks consist of acts of revenge, extrajudicial killings, and general crime. Much of this violence occurs between different ethnic groups and communities. These attacks increased after instability surfaced in Burkina Faso and are mainly perpetrated by self-defence groups, rogue military units, and criminal organizations.

There is a growing concern for the borders between Burkina Faso and the three countries of Benin, Togo and Ghana due to the spread of jihadist group the commitment of the jihadist groups to extend their influence across the borders from northern Mali to north-western Nigeria and northern Benin, passing through the Nigerian town of Dogondoutchi. This process of cross-border extension is made easier by 'favourable' conditions in the neighbouring countries: a limited military presence in the northern regions but also a shift from moderate Islam to extremists' views, especially in the northern Benin (due to Wahhabis growing influence). Meanwhile, there are

reports that the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a group that emerged out of Boko Haram, is poised to move into the security conundrum that has emerged out of the growth of rural banditry in Zamfara, creating the possibility of building bridges with the increasingly active groups operating in Niger.

Two schools of thought exist on whether VE presents a grave threat to Ghana. The first is that it is not a question if terrorists will strike, but when. Despite all security barriers, someone would be able to get through the net sooner or later. The second one is that Ghana does not provide a fertile ground for VE: it is a Christian-majority country and a secular state, its Muslim population are well embedded and integrated into society with intermarriages and social interactions, with religion being a part of an identity more than an expression of deep devotion. Some individuals may join VE movements and travel abroad, but they are a concern for security agencies and not a threat to wider society. In spite of all these potentials, Ghana is not a soft target, as measures have been put in place, and its security services are experienced, alert and vigilant.

Ghana's point of weakness is its porous borders with the neighbours which have succumbed to VE. Border com-

> *There is a growing concern for the borders between Burkina Faso and the three countries of Benin, Togo and Ghana due to the spread of jihadist groups*

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munities can act as conduits for VE penetration even without being radicalised themselves, through exploitation of ethnic grievances and ruptures in social cohesion. For example, an apprehension has arisen that herders from neighbouring countries could be used for hit-and-run attacks, given that they are constantly on the move. In the North, communities are sensitised but respondents perceive that radicalisation is spreading, but no evidence has been brought. Concerns were expressed that preaching sometimes inflames passions, and tensions occur between moderate imams and those who received theological education in MENA. Thus, VE cannot be combated by security measures alone, and focus on border communities and social awareness is needed.

Trafficking

Trafficking is an emerging concern in West Africa that is gaining increasing attention from the international community. It is considered as a key transit point in the trafficking of narcotics between Latin America and Europe. The region's geographical location alongside weak state capacity and rule of law and the presence of a well-developed smuggling network make it a favourable transit point for drug trafficking cartels and criminal gangs. West Africa is also a transit route for other narcotics and contraband, including cannabis resin, methamphetamines, heroin, cigarettes, and fraudulent medicines, and it is a source and channel for the trafficking of migrants and fi-rearms.

Traffickers use West Africa as a transit point because it serves as a viable and less monitored route to Europe than Central America and the Caribbean. This industry revolves around three hubs: the Gulf of Guinea, the Atlantic coastline, and the Sahel-Sahara region. In the Gulf of Guinea, the decline in economic activity and the presence of intrastate conflicts throughout West Africa provided an enabling environment for the burgeoning of the narcotic trade. Trafficking turned global with the support of corrupt public officials. The porous nature of many borders in the Sahel region makes the area a transit point for narcotics with the smuggling economy connecting countries and

communities across Mauritania, Benin, or Togo upward to Mali and Niger. On the Atlantic coast, the rise of organized crime is facilitated by a combination of weak governance and protracted conflicts.

Internal factors that promote trafficking in West Africa can be captured under the broad areas of crime and governance. The West Africa region offers many advantages for criminal gangs due to "weak rule of law, endemic corruption and political instability". State capture, where high-level elites facilitate the activities of criminal gangs by insulating them from the law enforcement agencies. Guinea-Bissau has a long history of fragility characterized by a highly politicized military, weak institutions, and a set of elites bent on controlling the state to extract revenues".

The trafficking activities of criminal gangs interlink with fragility and further drive violence in a number of ways. The growing activities of terrorist groups in the Sahel can feed into the fragility of the Sahel zone of the region. The terrorist groups per the transboundary character of their activities can establish or draw on existing illicit networks to move goods with the aim of generating substantial revenue to support their activities. Since these terrorist group are already into illegal activities, the marginal risk of undertaking a new illicit venture will be lower for them. The involvement of terrorist in the trafficking business makes them more resilient and entrenched as the "narco-terrorism" provides them with the opportunity to generate revenue to support and acquire new assets that will support their offensive against the state.

Concerns have surfaced about interdependence between drug trafficking and extremist groups in northern Mali and throughout the Sahel, leading to warnings of the dangers of narcoterrorism. The names of two Terrorist groups in the Sahel namely the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) or the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA), and the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have repeatedly surfaced in accounts of drug deals across the sub region. Furthermore, the process of trafficking can reward and promote skills related to violence. The process of trafficking involves

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enforcement, extortion, assault on the competition that requires the use of violence. These activities create a demand for non-productive skills associated with violence with the trafficking gangs willing to pay exorbitant rates for these violent skills. The reward for violent skills is more likely to attract unemployed youth who may forgo long-term investments needed for their participation in the formal sector. More so, the labour intensity of the workload in illegal trafficking is small and attracts majority of the unemployed and under employed youth. Competition between rival trafficking networks in West Africa can be a source of instability. Trafficking can also lead to the development of a local drug market and gang criminality.

With many of these trafficking gangs paying in kind rather than in cash rather, countries in West Africa are at risk of the development of a local drug market and gang criminality. Many of the youth in West Africa display the risk factors for gang membership: social marginalization, lack of social and economic opportunities, troubled families, academic failure, street socialization, histories of trauma, and the ready availability of drugs in the neighborhood. The fragility of the sub-region will be further affected if criminal gangs are allowed to establish local drug markets due to the presence of enabling factors such as small arms and massive underemployment, and purchasing power.

Maritime Insecurity

The West African sub-region experiences significant piracy threat that lead to maritime insecurity in the region. This threat is further worsened by a variety of internal problems and an under-resourced and poorly equipped navy. In the 2020, the attacks of pirates have grown bolder with the likelihood of more vessels targeted far out at sea. Other problems, which also contribute to insecurity on land, such as high unemployment, weak security, democratic decay, corruption, and the seeming profitability of crime also contribute to maritime insecurity.

The large-scale sales of oil bunkering to vessels offshore across the West African coast impair the marine security agencies in the sub-region. To this end, tales from the coast of West Africa show that unemployed youths are actively engaged in the theft of crude oil which is otherwise referred to as illegal oil bunkering. Mariners who transit West African areas such as Lagos and Bonny River (Nigeria), Conakry (Guinea) and Douala Outer Anchorage (Cameroon), are prone to security threats in such piracy prone areas. The increasing number of off-shore oil resources that are discovered from time to time along the coast of West Africa like that in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia, implies that the level of attacks along these territorial waters by pirates, either on oil rigs or against commercial vessels will equally be intensified, with spill over effects on security.

The best example is Nigeria, the majority of pirate attacks in the Gulf region occur off the country's coast and are predominantly conducted by Nigerian-based insurgents and criminals and have been for many years without much progress by the country in tackling the issue. This instability and insecurity have also, as discussed in Part 2, coincided with a decline in the country's democracy. The Nigerian government has sought to demobilise pirate groups with financial incentives in the past, with mixed results. Such instability off the coast has also coincided with an ongoing insurgency in the country's north, which, despite positive efforts to contain, remains a prominent threat to the country.

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Cross Border Insecurities

The rise in cross border criminal activities and the resultant insecurity has put cross border issues high on the security map of West Africa. The lack of a solid border and border security apparatus allows for cross-border illicit actions. Cross-border regions are the deadliest areas in West Africa: Between 2007 and 2019, 42% of violent events occurred within 100 kilometers of a land border. Terrorist organizations survive and prosper in countries with ineffective, porous, and insecure borders. Organizations like Al Boko Haram in Nigeria use weak and porous borders to evade the grasp of whichever government they are attempting to subvert. They will often establish training camps in the relative protection of an unstable country unable to secure its borders, then conduct attacks in the neighboring countries. Boko Haram has flourished in West Africa due to the lack of border security in the region. The organization uses the unsecured borders of Nigeria to conduct operations in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, acting as a destabilizing force in these neighboring countries.

French Forces assisting Mali with border security
source: intelligencebriefs.com

Conditions such as the vastness

of the geographic space, porous borders, cross-border movement of terrorists and its increasing nexus with transnational organized crime, intercommunal border conflicts, as well as illicit trafficking of goods make BSM a daunting task. Moreover, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating these security challenges. These challenges are compounded by a number of regional weaknesses in addressing the threats to BSM, including limited regional cooperation and information-sharing, corruption and bribery, as well as the limited use of technology, databases and biometric data systems.

In Ghana, the extreme north is fragile and worrisome in many aspects, particularly the areas where the three countries of Ghana, Togo and Benin share common borders with Burkina Faso and where there are growing threats from armed groups which operate cross-border. Ghana's inability to ensure effective border controls, limited database for migration management, as well as corruption account for the borders remaining porous. This places onus on the communities to act as a collective border security management partner.

Smuggling is a major livelihood for the youth in the border communities. With the land borders of Ghana closed, cross-border smuggling such as accompanying smugglers to help them to avoid taxes for a fee is increasing. In the Upper East region, up to 80% of livelihoods in Kulungungu are said to be based on smuggling. This can be petty, benefitting from price differentiations, such as of fertiliser and motorbikes, but also substantial when fuel is smuggled from Ghana to Togo and Burkina Faso; while cars are taken from Libya to Ghana. Smuggling is also used for overtly criminal purposes such as syndicated theft of motorbikes from Burkina Faso and Niger for sale in Ghana. Security personnel are believed to be complicit, e.g. in running Bawku in Upper East and Hamle in Upper West as smuggling hubs

Proliferation of small arms in West Africa

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16.4 specifically

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charges States to mitigate the illicit flow and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons since they can serve as hurdles for the attainment of the other Sustainable Development Goals. Regardless of this, West Africa contends with the venomous effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) until now. SALW are trafficked into West-Africa from various sources. These sources can be classified as domestic (arms produced or proliferated within a given country); regional (arms trafficked from one ECOWAS country to another); continental (arms trafficked into West Africa from other parts of Africa); and non-African sources (arms trafficked from other parts of the world into West Africa).

Increased proliferation of SALW in West Africa and the corresponding increase in their accessibility deepens the tendency of the average person to resort to violence as a means of dispute resolution. Weapons proliferation thus increases the potential for violence and violent conflicts in the sub-region and, by extension, threatens to retard development, cause massive human and physical destruction, serious human rights infractions, and a chronic atmosphere of instability and insecurity in the sub-region. Aside from Ghana, arms manufacturing is high in Nigeria, Benin, and other West African countries.

Arms are smuggled to and within West Africa, either from one state to another and/or from Europe and other African locations, such as Chad, Cameroon, South Africa and the Great Lakes region. Nigeria's borders with Cameroon, Niger, and Chad are well-known routes for arms trafficking. Private firearms in Sierra Leone, apart from those illicitly grabbed during its recent civil war and those locally produced, are sourced from neighbouring countries of Guinea, In Benin, illicit firearms are smuggled in from South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and Burkina Faso, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. Illegal arms dealers move arms from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria to Togo while locally made arms from the northern parts of Ghana are easily sold in Togo. The joint border of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia are notorious smuggling routes for arms in and out of the three countries. Firearms are smuggled through several routes around the world into

Part of a weapons haul collected in July and August 2011 by the DDRRR process in eastern DRC
source: thenewhumanitarian.org

West Africa and other parts of the African continent. Although these illicit routes snake covertly into each other with often unpredictable stopovers and diversions along the way, such that four arms-trafficking routes can be identified in West Africa: West Africa routes, Africa routes, Middle East routes, and European routes.

Ghana is noted for craft-produced firearms that are locally manufactured all across the country, with a strong regional reputation. Aside from craft-produced shotguns, imported Baikal shotguns are especially popular with local hunters and poachers. 84% of small arms and light weapons used in poaching in Ghana are foreign made. Increasingly organized armed gangs from Upper West, Bole; and related to artisanal mines, rosewood exploitation with armed guards represent an organized exploitation of a lucrative natural resource involving

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powerful stakeholders . Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs) Materials such as detonators, ammonium nitrate and detonation cords, which are also trafficked from Ghana to neighboring states. Ghana has become a key source of IED parts leakage from Tarkwa, Takoradi and other mining sites and stockpile depots in northern Ghana. SALW vulnerability in the West Africa and Ghana has wider security implications. The strategies used by jihadist groups require an innovative approach to launch insurgency and a better knowledge of weapon manufacturing. The movement and availability of SALW and the presence of the technical skills to produce such weaponry can provide these groups with the opportunity to recruit people to support them in production of small arms and explosives. The presence of self-defence groups for protection in local communities complicates the issue as they could rely on the SALW to perpetuate violence on innocent civilians.

Weak and Ineffective State Capacity

The capacity and effectiveness of the West African states to address the security threats posed by politically violent groups, community upheavals and terrorists is weak. The threat from terrorism has recently been evident in Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Niger with the potential to spread into other coastal states in the region. The threat is distinctive because the organisations needed to counter it effectively require a level of sophistication and cost that are beyond the means of many West African states. Countries such as Nigeria and Burkina Faso with economies that are sufficiently robust to finance their militaries do not have adequate security forces for the more demanding task of preventing the escalation of terrorism. Examples exist in the sub-region of how Islamic militias could equip itself sufficiently to defeat the Malian army. In the Sahel region, the endemic insecurity enables a rebel force to defeat the army of Central African Republic and to infiltrate into north-eastern Nigeria.

The limitations of the West African militaries to respond to these expanding threats have all been all too evident. In Mali and Niger, the weakness is inevitable due to the economic and geographic funda-

mentals. These countries are too poor to impose security on their highly dispersed populations. In both Mali and Nigeria, the government was accused of not putting in the needed investment in the north to fight the intractable insurgency of the Tuareg uprising and the Boko Haram respectively. In Nigeria, the military task to counter terrorism is relatively modest with counter-terrorism intelligence difficult to meet. The burden on the state to protect citizens from the activities of these terrorist groups calls for a re-think about security provision. For example, faced with repeated attacks by terrorist groups in Burkina Faso, the parliament unanimously adopted a law allowing for the recruitment of local volunteers to be trained to join the counter-terrorism insurgency against the jihadist groups. Sahel and West Africa states have experienced an expanding jihadist, local militia and community violence that collectively undermined and exposed the inability of state security forces to provide protection.

Ghana is yet to record any terrorist attack but there are visible signs and traces of such an event occurring. Since 2018, the terrorist attacks in neighbouring Burkina Faso occurs near the border communities with Ghana putting these border communities at risk. The concern is that there may be a possible spill over of the terrorist threat to northern Ghana and possibly that of Togo. The northern territories of Ghana can be a target for armed terrorist groups because the areas serve as essential transit point for goods from Tema and Lome ports to the landlocked countries of Burkina Faso and Niger. The risk of radicalisation of the local population is high due to religious, socioeconomic, political factors in a context of unbalanced South-North development that fosters feelings of abandonment, frustration and exclusion. The deployment of military forces to the northernmost part of Ghana due to the deteriorating security situation is more likely to make the soldiers a target for terrorist attack. Ghana's participation in Peace Support Operations (PSO) exposes the country to potential threats. Countries that contributed troops to the PSO in Mali were warned by the jihadist group to immediately withdraw their troops or risk being attacked. With Ghana having contributed troops to the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the country can be listed as a potential target.

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The presence of all the security agencies in the five northernmost regions is a big incentive in the fight against terrorism. In Ghana, internal security forces are composed mainly of the police, immigration and customs. These services do not have either enough staff or equipment (vehicles, radio, and light infrastructure) that would allow them to control a very long porous border. They are mainly deployed in permanent border control posts which can be easily bypassed if someone wants to enter the country illegally. Moreover, they would not be protected enough to face terrorist attacks should these happen. To solve this problem, joint positions with the GAF at the borders were established and the operation "Conquered Fist" launched with relevant officers from respective services being embedded in the headquarters. With such a mechanism, the GAF can better protect the police and immigration services when they enforce the law and are able to better reach out to local communities, especially given the fact that they are more trusted than other security actors. The launching of the military operation "Conquered Fist" in May 2019 is to make the communities feel the presence of the security agencies. Other joint international military operations named "operation Koudanlgou" performed by Ghana together with Togo, Burkinabe and Ivorian armed forces in the framework of the Accra Infinitive. The Accra Framework provides for the sharing of information and intelligence, training of security and intelligence personnel and the conduct of joint cross-border military operations to sustain border security.

Politics and Governance

West Africa continues to suffer the devastating effects of conflict and democratic backsliding as the region showed the fastest decline in political rights and civil liberties for the year 2019. The rise of authoritarianism in West Africa is eroding much of the democratic progression recorded in many countries in the 2000s. The Freedom House 2020 report provides striking evidence of the problem with five countries in West Africa – Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria, which recorded year on year decline in democratic progress. Two key issues stand out clearly: increasing authoritarianism

President Alpha Condé (Embattled president of Guinea)
source: premiumtimesng.com

and the desire of incumbent presidents to extend presidential term limits.

The phenomenon of "third Termism" and the intolerance for opposing views among the ruling elites is eroding democratic gains in West Africa. Third Termism is seen in many quarters as "Africa's constitutional failure" in the wake of the success of blocking third terms in Nigeria (2006) and Burkina Faso (2014). Recent examples in Guinea, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire reveal the use of constitutional amendments by incumbents to extend their term limits.   In Guinea, an anticipated constitutional referendum was held, enabling President Alpha Conde to prolong his presidency for a third term in October, which sparked protests as well as clashes between the opposition and security forces. Similarly, in Togo, the 2019 constitutional amendment allowed president Faure Gnassingbe to run for a fourth term, leading to his re-election in February and sparking a wave of protests. Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara was again elected president

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Recent examples in Guinea, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire reveal the use of constitutional amendments by incumbents to extend their term limits.

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in October 2020 after extending his term limit. The violent clashes between opposition supporters and the government marked a significant departure from the previous years' relative stability in Cote d'Ivoire. The rising political disagreement and violence is heightening polarization and potential relapse of instability in Cote d'Ivoire.

Flawed elections is also becoming chronic in the sub-region. In Nigeria, the electoral commission postponed the first round of voting hours for national election, and state-level elections were postponed for the first round. Opposition parties in Benin were effectively excluded from competing in parliamentary elections, and an internet shutdown and violent state repression of protest instigated. In Senegal, the two most prominent opposition politicians were barred from the presidential election due to criminal cases that were widely viewed as politically motivated.

Election related violence continues to be reported in the sub region despite some countries reporting relatively peaceful elections in 2020. Recent elections in Ghana, Niger and Burkina Faso were relatively peaceful amidst isolated incidences of violence. In Mali, the Constitutional Court's overturning of the parliamentary election results as well as the further deterioration of security and living conditions in the country sparked protests and violent clashes between the opposition and security forces. The continuous attacks on opposition candidates and their supporters have the potential to affect political participation and the risk of ethnic violence in the sub-region. The incidence of violent protests surrounding the electoral process in many countries in West Africa is symptomatic of protracted political disagreements and tensions with implications for the peace and stability of the region.

In the last couple of years, there have been growing demonstrations by political parties and civil society in West Africa over the perceived lack of inclusivity and transparency of Election Management Boards (EMB). The continuous attack on EMBs constitutes a major driver for heightened political violence during elections. In addition, the dwindling trust and confidence in the EMBs could set the

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stage for political parties to reject election results and resort to the use of post-election violence. Considering the fact that elections in West Africa are underpinned by ethnic division, the series of violent protests witnessed in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and to some extent in Ghana and Nigeria during election is a cause for concern for the future of elections and democratic deepening in the region. In Ghana, the heightened political tensions as a result of growing hostile communication and inter party violence between the supporters of the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party during the elections of December 7, 2020 could undermine the integrity of future elections with potentials for aggravated violence.

The growing political insecurity in the West African region is gradually opening up spaces and providing the opportunity for the re-entry of the military into mainstream politics through the use of coup d'états. The recent political dynamics leading to the coup d'états in Mali and Guinea indicate a worrying trend that could truncate efforts towards democratic stability of West Africa. Soldiers of the Malian army conducted a coup d'état on August 18, 2020. This resulted in further violence, the ousting of President Boubacar Keita, and the subsequent dissolution of the government and parliament. In November, a transitional government was formed, led by new President Bah N'Daw. In Guinea, the military ousted President Alpha Conde leading to the suspension of the country from ECOWAS. Unfortunately, in both Mali and Guinea, the coup leaders have resorted to the use of populist strategies to cultivate the support of the citizens. The massive endorsement and support for the coup makers among the citizenry is driven by the failure of past governments.

Democratic decline has coincided with rising insecurity, with both now reinforcing each other. For example, political insecurity, especially the military coup d'état in Mali and the crisis in Burkina Faso, presents a potential opportunistic expansion and consolidation of violent extremism beyond the North and Central regions of the country. This has ramifications for national social cohesion and a contagion effect on regional peace and security.

In Ghana, politics and governance is considered the most vulnerable pillar in the Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA) based on underscoring challenges around combating corruption and ensuring transparency and accountability, increasing women's participation in politics and mitigating political violence. The CRVA further underscored the threat posed by political vigilantism and the polarizing character of party politics during election. The militancy associated with the recent confirmation of MMDCEs raises much displeasure as it reinforces the strongman notion that is gradually permeating the political landscape of many countries in West Africa. Politics is further considered as an exacerbating factor in communal conflicts, spike in political vigilante activities, election related violence, and the increasing use of nepotism and clientelism in the distribution of government resources and positions in Ghana. In addition, the winner takes all is considered a key driver of political rivalry which more often results in violence between the two main political parties of National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The appointing power of the president from the national level to the local level aggravates the tensions during elections. Evidence of intra-party violence in the sharing of political spoils through appointment to positions is recorded after every election in Ghana with that in 2016 leading to intimidation and criminal activities.

The unbalanced South-North development in Ghana fosters feelings of abandonment, frustration and exclusion among the populations though violence has not been used as a grievance mechanism to drive secession. Rather, the perceived marginalization of the Volta region has resulted in the push for a new state referred to as 'Western Togoland' by the leaders of the advocacy group referred to as the Homeland Study Group Foundation. Members of the group have on numerous occasions been arrested on charges of treason, fuelling outrage from their supporters. With the unfortunate demise of the leader of the group, it is not known whether a new leadership will emerge and if this happens, the course of action and strategy that will be undertaken. The quest for secession by the Homeland Study Group Foundation does not receive attention in the other regions of the country.

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Participation in politics is considered a male dominated endeavour with a CRVA score of 2.95 out of 10. This suggests that Ghanaian women remain underrepresented. According to the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, Ghana lags behind other sub Saharan countries such as Rwanda and Namibia. These have achieved 20% or more female parliamentary representation. Obstacles to female representation in Ghanaian society include relatively low rates of literacy; low participation in tertiary education; and low participation in professional occupations. For example, the male participation in tertiary education is 2.5 times that of women. Ghanaian youth on the other hand participated during electoral activities and did a lot of leg work for their political parties but these activities did not translate into formal participation in decision-making processes. For the 2017 parliament, out of the 275-members of parliament, only 13 members qualify as "youth" (under the age of 35). There is strong evidence that the participation of young people in formal, institutional political processes is relatively low when compared to older citizens across the globe. This challenges the representativeness of the political system and leads to the disenfranchisement of young people.

The issue of corruption constitutes a profound threat to all systems of government. In most West African countries, corruption constitutes an important means by which individual wants and needs, especially in patronage-ridden personal regimes, can be satisfied. Although corruption is a general problem for all governments, governments in the Sub-region tend to exhibit the problem in a particularly noteworthy way. In countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, corruption is considered as a way of life. Weak institutions and their inability to sanction regimes in order to tackle corruption allows the governing elites of most African countries to engage in high and sometimes egregious levels of corruption, increasingly diverting state resources for personal gain. In Ghana, the presence of legal structures to promote transparency exist but this is undermined by the laxity in the application of the rules.

Table 1: *Politics and Governance Vulnerability and Risk for Ghana*

Vulnerabilities	Perceptions of mistrust and lack of transparency of government institutions Perceptions of corruption Polarized political system along party and regional lines Perceived 'winner takes all' political system Perceptions of nepotism Uneven regional distributions of resources and development Under-representation of women and youth in political decision-making Lack of clarity around land tenure of ownership Poor chieftaincy succession planning Gender-based violence (GBV) and child abuse
Risk	Election violence Clashes between politically-aligned vigilante groups Politicized inter-communal conflict Tension/conflict related to secessionism in Volta Region Marginalisation of People with Disabilities Galamsey operations (illegal mining activity)

Source: Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Ghana (2017)

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For West Africa, bribery more generally, continues to impede access to basic services. The 2019 Global Corruption Barometer - Africa revealed that more than one out of four people – or approximately 130 million citizens in the 35 African countries surveyed – paid a bribe to access essential public services, like health care. Scoring 36 on the CPI, Côte d'Ivoire has significantly improved, by nine points since 2013. However, the political crisis surrounding the re-election of President Allasane Ouattara, which erupted into violence and human right abuses risks derailing the progress. Senegal scored 45 on the CPI with an improvement of 12 points since 2012. Liberia scored 28 points but declined by ten points since 2013. Enforcing numerous existing anti-corruption commitments including Agenda 2063 and national anti-graft and corruption practices laws is difficult.

Analyses of Conflicts in West Africa

Governments in West Africa are increasingly confronted with new forms of political violence. A total of 30360 violent incidents were recorded in 21 countries from January 1997 to June 2019. Political violence has increased significantly faster than other types of conflicts. In west Africa, the number of countries experiencing local intensification of conflicts have risen sharply with civilian and border towns becoming the new targets. The concentration of conflicts along border areas has increased significantly.

Violence targeting civilians also intensified in West Africa. Targeting civilians is a strategy of indiscriminate violence against civilians with the goal of recording more civilian deaths and displacement. Civilian deaths in West Africa due to political violence increased more than 50% between 2011 and 2018 with the number of civilian deaths reaching 4645 victims in 2018. Civilians remain the primary victims of the increased violence in North and West Africa. Civilians are involved as victims in more conflicts than any other types of actors in the region, including state forces, rebel groups, political and identity militias, and external forces.

Violent conflicts tend to regionalise across state borders because armed groups find it relatively easy to relocate when they are defeated by counter-insurgency efforts. Border towns are also preferred because pressure by one country on one group allows for easy relocation to a neighbouring country with limited military capabilities or weak political will. Examples include Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Boko Haram. Border communities are preferred by armed groups because they provide grounds for conducting military operations, easy access to potential recruits and facilitates the establishment of easy bases.

In the Lake Chad region, the Jihadist organisation, Boko Haram, is attempting to revive three major hotspots of violence: the Jihadist insurgency led by the Boko Haram in the lake Chad region, the acts of violence carried out by the armed groups in the Niger Delta against the federal government and the oil companies, and the communal violence between pastoral herders and farmers in the Middle Belt. Taken together, these conflicts accounted for 30% of the violent events and half (49%) of the victims in the overall region since 1997.

The second hotspot of violence in the sub-region is the central part of the West African Sahel which comprises eastern Mauritania, much of Mali, the north of Burkina Faso and the west of Niger. Conflicts in this zone is dominated by civil wars, rebellions and clashes with groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). Violence has shifted over time. Civilian causalities in the Chadian civil war ended in 2010 but the Lake Chad area still experiences a current insurgency led by Boko Haram. In both Niger and Mali, the northern Tuareg rebel-

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lion of the late 2000s and the Islamist Insurgency in Mali in 2012 affected the stability of the area. In Burkina Faso, the development of Islamic terrorism in the north of the country has resulted in a significant increase in the number of violent events and victims. The area continues to be an epicentre of transnational violence because the Jihadist groups exploit unresolved disputes and power struggles among the local population. Between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger most attacks happen outside urban centres and away from major road corridors.

Conflicts are local but increasingly violent. Extremist ideas fuelled by transnational groups fail to spread rapidly across the region with less than 35% of regions with violence exhibiting signs of possible diffusion. Over the years, Nigeria has been the country most affected by political violence with one-third of the violent events and half of the victims recorded in North and West Africa. The Lake Chad region is the largest epicentre of violence due to the indiscriminate campaign of terror led by Boko Haram against government forces, militias, traditional authorities, concurrent religious movement and the wider civilian population.

Natural resource is an ingredient used to explain the rise in armed conflict between warlords or between herders and farmers. Climate change increases the likelihood of armed conflict by causing migration and altering the availability of water, land and pasture. Extreme deviations in rainfall are positively associated with all types of political conflict. The abundance or scarcity of natural resources does not automatically lead to armed conflict. Rather than through crop failures, the wider socioeconomic and political context in which the conflict develops is a much more significant factor to explain organised violence. The need for sovereignty explains the high incidence of rebellion in West Africa. Conflicts can occur when marginalised groups feel the need to create a new state to enjoy the privileges of sovereignty by fighting for secession. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azward (MNLA) in Mali declared an independence for Azawad in 2012 before seeking greater territory within Mali.

Guinea Military officers
source: aljazeera.com

Military interventions have had differential effects on the geography of conflicts in West Africa with none achieving durable peace. The new conflicts in the sub-region –rebellions, insurgencies, coup d'états and protest movements are being carried out in a security environment that is much more global than before. These new conflicts are no longer constrained by one geographical scale: militants can exploit local grievances, develop a national agenda, operate regionally, and exploit global narratives and resources simultaneously. These conflicts tend to spill over international boundaries as militants move to more welcoming areas when under pressure from government forces. Emerging rebellions tend to be driven by issues of identity rather than ideologies and target civilians explicitly. Conflicts in West Africa tend to involve a multitude of radical organisations, secessionists groups and ethnic militias who merge, split and change sides in a rather unpredictable manner.

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Chapter 4
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter gives a synopsis of the review findings which serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations and the implications of all these for the security and development of West Africa and Ghana in particular.

Conclusion

West Africa and Ghana face serious security challenges that have consequences for public safety. The sub-region over the years has encountered several unresolved security problems that are further compounded by emerging threats and health pandemics. The spread of terrorism and religious extremism in the Sahel, increasing poverty and inequality, youth bulge and the increasing unemployed, democratic decline and inadequate provision of public services has all affected the security of West Africa.

As West Africa's population booms and its economy continues to expand, the opportunities for growth across the region are vast. Despite economic gains recorded for many of the countries in the sub-region, which has obviously been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, economic growth rates in most of the countries are lagging and poverty remains high alongside widening inequality. Essentially, the economic growth has not translated into improved economic and social wellbeing of the people leading to strains in society. Many of the citizens are not benefiting from the growth which has resulted in grievances from a large section of the population. When people are unable to meet their basic needs or obtain what they want from the government, they generally resort to either peaceful means such

as mass protests, or illegal and criminal practices or to unbridled violence that can lead to public unrest and instability

The growing youth population in West Africa serve as a potential catalyst for economic growth and at the same time constitute a challenge that can be a trigger for violence if the expectations of the youth for jobs and better living conditions remain unmet. Demographic data suggest that the youth share in the labour force will generate a demographic dividend for Africa that will help boost economic growth. Unfortunately, the dividend which depends on the demographic transition is progressing very slowly with regional fertility averages either stagnant or increasing, affecting the prospects of economic growth. A major concern for the youth is the lack of a steady income which makes it extremely difficult for them to move out of poverty.

The review identified weak governance systems as a driver of insecurity in West Africa. Weak governance systems result in chronic instability, in which the state is unable to protect its citizens and their property, control its borders and the whole of its territory, and create an environment that promotes diversity and cohabitation. The state is then unable to fight against injustice and corruption, uphold human rights or establish sustainable democratic institution. All these factors have implications for the stability of the region.

Since 2010, the drivers of security and threats in West Africa and Ghana in particular have shifted to sub-regional and community-based threats. State capacity is weak at the periphery with many

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border communities providing fertile grounds for transnational organised crime networks to flourish. The role of the state has not changed but it has failed to continuously meet the expectations of citizens leading to grievances that translate into tensions and public protest some of which turn violent. The presence of non-state armed actors has increased significantly with the activities powering violence and insecurity in West Africa especially the Sahel areas where the state's presence is traditionally weak and contested.

At the sub-state level community-based conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions dominate at the border communities. Violent extremism intersects with local conflicts to further exacerbate the insecurities at the sub-state level. Meanwhile, human rights violations and governance failures contribute to fuelling local insurgencies. The easy access to weapons in a context of widespread insecurity pose serious security challenges that easily escalates community tensions into violence in West Africa. The failure of the state justice system that are often perceived as distant and corrupt to handle local conflicts nurtures frustration that form a fertile ground for violent extremist groups. Maritime security and trafficking add to the vista of insecurities in the region.

The democratisation project in West Africa has achieved mixed results in terms of building on institutions and in establishing their legitimacy. Whilst some countries are deepening their democratic credentials others have retrogressed. Authoritarianism is on the ascendency among the ruling elites with some countries ruled by "strongmen". Despite the decline, a number of countries have over the years strengthened their democratic systems but within this category, there is a tendency for the ruling government to suppress opposition groups, postpone elections, eliminate term limits, and abuse human rights to maintain power. The recent coup in Guinea points to the resurgence of "coup culture" in West Africa in contravention of the Lome Declaration of 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy. Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad have all in the past seen new leaders rise from their respective militaries. These coups as captured by the 2014 AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) origi-

nates from the deficiencies in governance. Greed, mismanagement of diversity, human rights violations, unwillingness to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions and the revision of term limits through unconstitutional means and corruption trigger uprisings and provide opportunity for the military to take over the reins of power. A detailed analysis of the performance of the state from the perspective of the executive, judiciary, security and development sectors will provide insights on the effects of these factors on the instability of the region.

Ghana is considered peaceful but surrounded by unstable states: Burkina Faso to the north with ever expanding and violent terrorist challenges and La Cote d'Ivoire that has just gone through a contentious election to the west and Togo, that has gone through elections but with prevailing and deepening underlying tensions. Beyond Burkina Faso into the Sahel region, the threat of violent extremism and terrorism that are transnational in character persist with a weak state capacity to respond. Ghana's threat profile is also affected by her engagements in international peace support operations, the presence of foreign businesses and interests, and the easy access to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Internal insecurities at the sub-state level characterized by community violence (resulting from mining, land, chieftaincy and environmental challenges) and threats faced by the state (pandemics, vigilantism, small arms and light weapons proliferation (SALW), road accidents, cyber and maritime insecurities), increasing crime are all contributing to fragilities. All these factors alongside the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic have implications for the stability and the development of the region.

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Recommendations

Specifically, countries in the region could consider the following policy recommendations:

1. Pursue, stability, growth, and development

The potential for economic growth in West Africa is enormous. With improving economies and a youthful workforce looking for jobs, West African countries can pursue economic growth through intra-regional trade and in partnership with the private sector. Africa currently has the lowest percentage of intra-regional trade in the world at 18%, compared with 70% in Europe, 55% in North America, 45% in Asia and 35% in Latin America.

• Pursue economic integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Developing integration through a borderless Africa would lay the foundation for a viable continental market to accelerate growth and allow Africa to be more competitive in global trade and value chains. It would also allow industries to develop across borders, creating economies of scale for investors as they look at wider integrated markets.

• Countries in West Africa should not disproportionately focus resources on the manufacturing sector, which is currently in a slump amid frail global demand, dented by protectionism, but focus on a policy fix that includes other sectors including agriculture, services and mining.

• Modernize the economy to attract competitiveness and investment in the private sector for economic development

• *Create enabling business environment for small and medium-sized enterprises to thrive by making countries in West Africa a progressively easier place to do business by introducing several reforms.*

• *Provide investments to start and finish critical infrastructure projects in power, roads, and rail across the country, as well as direct investments in people to lift them up out or poverty.*

• *Develop infrastructure that is critical to the development of West Africa by creating new economic landscapes that are high value-added by harnessing the potential for public and private entrepreneurship. This means building dynamic export-oriented sectors using the continent's comparative advantage of abundant human and natural resources.*

• *Concentrate scarce infrastructure investment into strategic areas to drive dynamic comparative advantage in large international markets by facilitating local initiatives step by step over several decades*

2. Addressing unemployment

The working-age population for West Africa, is trending upward, but the level of labour force participation appears to be static and high as compared with the Sub-Saharan African average. For example, Burkina Faso's rate was estimated at 83 percent in 2016, and the Sub-Saharan African average at only 70 percent. But West African rates have stalled, even falling slightly for some countries such as Benin's (rate declined from 72.4 percent in 2000 to 71.7 percent in 2016. As millions of young people join the labour market, the pressure to provide quality jobs will escalate. West Africa's labour market is dominated by the informal sector, which is a default option for a large majority of the unemployed youth and women.

• *Develop an effective strategy for structural change that spans industries with and without smokestacks to solve the youth employment problem*

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• *Support the growing and innovative youth entrepreneurs with leadership development opportunities, finance, and links to wider markets.*

• *Include leadership, soft skills, and digital skills in training and education systems to increase the success of young job seekers.*

• *Encourage greater links between the private sector and education and training institutions so that young people must have access to education and training that equips them with the skills employers need. Employers need to find ways to inform curriculums and support early employment opportunities as the first job often sets the path for a young person's career.*

• *Make financing of small businesses and entrepreneurs easier by eliminating risk through digitization, alternative forms of finance, guarantees, and changing perceptions.*

• *The promotion of an enabling environment (legal frameworks, policies and plans) for young people's participation in a broad range of processes and areas (electoral and parliamentary processes, public administration and local governance, including in peacebuilding environments) at local, sub-national and national levels;*

• *The promotion of young people's skills and capacities to participate actively in democratic practices, including in local, national, and global processes (leadership trainings, etc.)*

• *The promotion of young women's participation and presence in political office and decision-making at all levels (participation of young women -through both elected and non-elected positions).*

3. Addressing the Spread of Terrorism, Cross Border Crimes, Trafficking and Maritime Piracy

• *Build regional alliances, promote space-based policies and support border regions by building intelligence network.*

Ghana Armed Forces operating in border towns source: pulse.com.gh

• *Develop a strong preventative intelligence apparatus that can effectively direct the military's limited resources and increase the number of foiled attacks.*

• *Countries should support bi- and multi-lateral training assistance programs, with support from regional and international partners, to enhance institutional and operational capacity. Utilizing the technology and capacity available through international partner organizations such as INTERPOL and the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme;*

• *Continue the joint military offensives launched by the countries of the region and their international allies that have proved effective in managing the growing threat of terrorism in the region. Coordinated military intervention is critical in the periphery of states.*

• *Design territorial policies that considers the unique geography of the conflicts that affect them.*

Recommendations

These interventions should target border regions due to the cross-border nature of violence.

• West African states should pursue their efforts to build regional forces that can address the movement of violent extremist groups through the sharing of information and intelligence.

• Encourage regional collaboration and initiatives and support regional organisations such as ECOWAS, in close collaboration with UNODC, to address trafficking, piracy, and terrorism threats. This requires solid regional initiatives and strong coordination with countries from outside the region (from North Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the United States).

• Use anti–money laundering mechanisms to control trafficking Additionally, countries should support regional initiatives such as the ECOWAS Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa.

• Encourage the sharing of and learning from successful examples from other parts of the world, particularly in relation to urban crime control, narcotics (from Latin America and the Caribbean), and antipiracy activities (from East Africa and East Asia).

• Harmonising legislation dealing with data protection, terrorism and transnational organized crime; developing and operationalizing a multi-agency approach through collaboration with and between police, financial intelligence units, customs, immigration, intelligence and customs; and,

Resource Management
• *Better land management and addressing grievances linked to land access is needed.*

• *The boom in extractives discoveries requires greater attention to conflict risks, managing community and regional grievances as well as corruption.*

Human Development
• *Significant investments in basic and technical education are required to increase the size of the skilled labour force and improve livelihoods for youth.*

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